

# Orbiter Entry Aeroheating Working Group viscous CFD boundary layer transition trailblazer solutions

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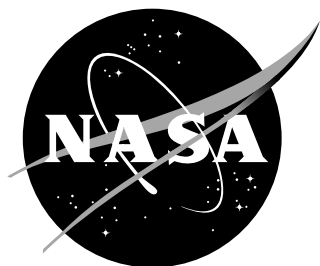
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## Abstract

Boundary layer transition correlations for the Shuttle Orbiter have been previously developed utilizing a two-layer boundary layer prediction technique. The particular two-layer technique that was used is limited to Mach numbers less than 20. To allow assessments at Mach numbers greater than 20, it is proposed to use viscous CFD to predict boundary layer properties. This report addresses if the existing Orbiter entry aeroheating viscous CFD solutions, which were originally intended to be used for heat transfer rate predictions, adequately resolve boundary layer edge properties and if the existing two-layer results could be leveraged to reduce the number of needed CFD solutions. The boundary layer edge parameters from viscous CFD solutions are extracted along the wind side centerline of the Space Shuttle Orbiter at reentry conditions, and are compared with results from the two-layer boundary layer prediction technique. The differences between the viscous CFD and two-layer prediction techniques vary between Mach 6 and 18 flight conditions and Mach 6 wind tunnel conditions, and there is not a straightforward scaling between the viscous CFD and two-layer values. Therefore: it is not possible to leverage the existing two-layer Orbiter flight boundary layer data set as a substitute for a viscous CFD data set; but viscous CFD solutions at the current grid resolution are sufficient to produce a boundary layer data set suitable for applying edge-based boundary layer transition correlations.

## Nomenclature

### Symbols

$H$	total enthalpy, BTU/slug
$L$	reference length; 1280 in. full-scale, 9.6 in. wind tunnel model scale
$M$	Mach number
$Re$	Reynolds number
$Re_\theta$	$V_e\theta/\nu_e$
$V$	fluid speed, fps
$\delta$	boundary layer thickness, in.
$\mu$	viscosity, slug/ft-s
$\nu$	kinematic viscosity, $\mu/\rho$ , ft <sup>2</sup> /s
$\rho$	density, slug/ft <sup>3</sup>
$\theta$	momentum thickness, in.

### Subscripts

$e$	boundary layer edge
$inv$	inviscid layer
$\infty$	free stream

### Acronyms

CFD	computational fluid dynamics
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ISSHVFW International Space Station heavy vehicle forward weight  
RTF return-to-flight  
STS space transportation system

## Introduction

This report is a formal product delivery from Langley Research Center to the Space Shuttle program in support of the return-to-flight (RTF) effort, as specified in a sub-task agreement, number RTF-08, between Langley and Johnson Space Center. The scope of the work is set by the sub-task agreement.

The technology addressed is the numerical prediction of boundary layer edge properties in the flow about the Shuttle Orbiter at reentry and hypersonic wind tunnel conditions. The engineering context is the development and application of boundary layer transition predictions for the Orbiter during reentry, in particular for the prediction of forced, or bypass, transition due to an off-nominal Orbiter wind side surface.

Previously, a data set of boundary layer properties used to correlate boundary layer transition behavior for the Orbiter at both wind tunnel and flight conditions had been created using a two-layer technique [2]. The two-layer technique uses computational fluid dynamics (CFD) to predict an inviscid flow field and then utilizes an approximate engineering tool to account for the effect of viscosity, producing the boundary layer estimates. Boundary layer transition correlations [1] have been created for the Orbiter program recently using this wind tunnel data set in conjunction with wind tunnel experiments, and the correlations are applied as part of the Shuttle mission operations.

There is a shortcoming in the current transition prediction tool that motivates the present study: the existing two-layer technique does not account for non-equilibrium chemistry. Chemical non-equilibrium effects are important in the Orbiter reentry flow field at Mach numbers greater than 15–18 [8], but boundary layer transition predictions are desired up to Mach 21–23.

The viscous CFD codes used by the Orbiter Entry Aeroheating Team model chemical non-equilibrium and are suitable for simulating all Mach number Orbiter flow fields within the continuum regime, up to about Mach 25, and thus could alleviate the shortcoming. This report investigates the feasibility of using the viscous CFD solvers instead of the two-layer engineering approach to define the Orbiter boundary layer properties from which new boundary layer transition correlations may be developed. While not investigated in the present study, viscous CFD flow field simulations also provide boundary layer profile data, which the two-layer technique does not. Having boundary layer profile data may allow the development of transition correlations that are not possible in the two-layer context. The moniker trailblazer is used to reflect the feasibility nature of this study, in contrast to subsequent work to develop the full flight database.

The viscous CFD codes used for the present study have been shown [4] to match measured boundary layer thickness for an Orbiter model at wind tunnel conditions with an 11% standard deviation. For this trailblazer report, 11% is used as an

acceptance criteria.

If the existing two-layer results could be scaled or otherwise mapped to match viscous CFD results, then conversion to viscous CFD correlations would only require new high-Mach-number flight solutions. Otherwise, a full viscous CFD data set would have to be generated at both flight and wind tunnel conditions. The primary task of this report is to spot check the two-layer and viscous CFD boundary layer properties for equivalence or a simple scaling relationship. Two ancillary questions addressed in the report are the adequacy of grid resolution in the viscous CFD solutions and the consistency between LAURA and DPLR results.

## CFD codes

The two-layer boundary layer prediction technique used the Langley Approximate Three-Dimensional Convective Heating engineering code (LATCH [3]) to provide the boundary layer properties. LATCH requires a background inviscid CFD solution within which to operate. The inviscid flow fields for the two-layer technique are provided by the Langley Aerothermodynamic Upwind Relaxation Algorithm (LAURA [5,6]). LAURA is a nominally second-order accurate upwind finite-volume flow solver with a five-species, single-temperature air model.

LAURA is also used as a viscous flow solver, along with the Data-Parallel Line Relaxation code (DPLR [7]), to compute boundary layers integral to the flow field simulations. Both LAURA and DPLR are used with a five-species, single-temperature air model, a partially catalytic surface with reaction-cured glass properties, and a radiative equilibrium surface temperature with an emissivity of 0.89. Both LAURA and DPLR have been accepted by the Orbiter Configuration Control Board for the simulation of smooth-body laminar Orbiter entry flow fields [4].

## Boundary layer edge definition

The boundary layer edge is determined from the CFD solutions using the BLAYER [4,9] post-processing software. Within BLAYER, the boundary layer edge is defined as the distance above the surface where  $H = 0.995 H_{inv}$ . In general,  $H_{inv} = H_{\infty}$ , but the BLAYER detection logic is designed to accommodate locations within the CFD solutions where total enthalpy is not exactly conserved through the bow shock due to numerical dissipation effects.

## Grid convergence

Grid convergence of the predicted transition parameter was investigated by refining the CFD volume grids in the direction traversing from the Orbiter surface to the free stream. The primary boundary layer transition parameter utilized by RTF can be expressed as  $\left(\frac{Re_{\theta}}{M_e}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{\delta}\right)$ . The symbols have conventional meaning:  $\delta$  is boundary layer thickness,  $M_e$  is boundary layer edge Mach number, and  $Re_{\theta}$  is Reynolds number based on momentum thickness.

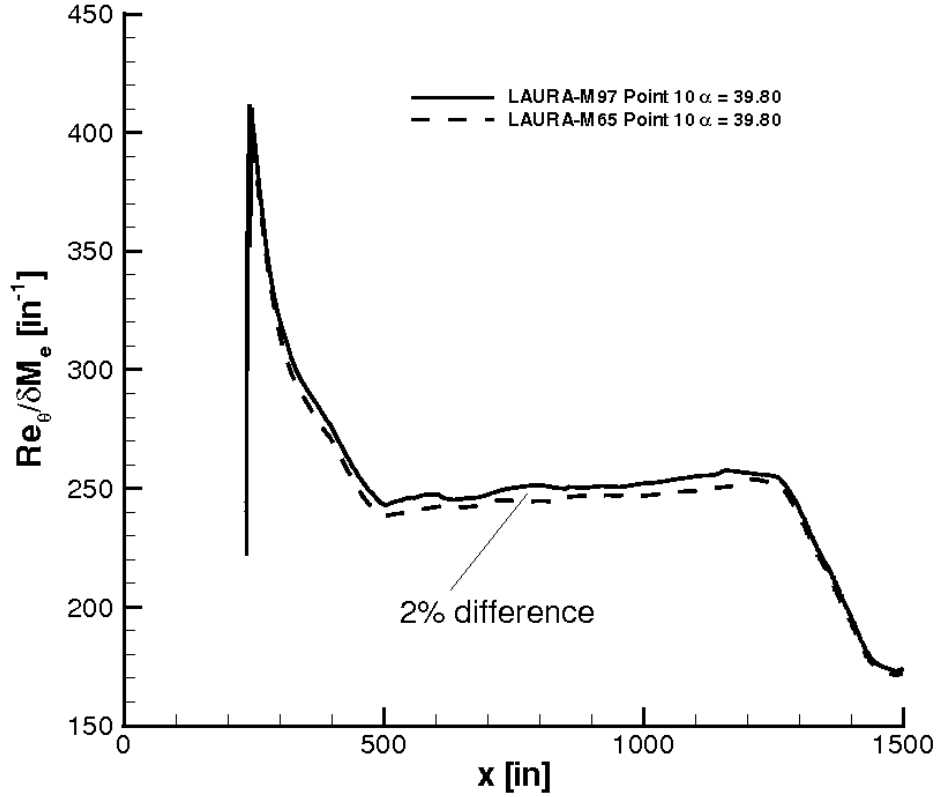


Figure 1. Grid convergence of  $\left(\frac{Re_\theta}{M_e}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{\delta}\right)$  at Mach 12. Fine grid (M 97) has 97 points, versus 65 for coarse (M 65), in the body-normal direction.

The grid convergence of the transition parameter  $\left(\frac{Re_\theta}{M_e}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{\delta}\right)$  along the Orbiter wind side centerline is shown in Figure 1 at Mach 12 flight conditions and in Figure 2 at Mach 18 flight conditions. The Mach 12 case corresponds to a point on the ISSHVFW [4] trajectory. The Mach 18 case is at the same free stream conditions as an STS-107 trajectory point but is at 45 degrees angle of attack. All solutions are viscous LAURA solutions. The legend designation ‘M65’ indicates solutions with 65 points in the body-normal direction, shown as dashed lines in the figures. The fine grids, ‘M97’, have 50% more cells, for 97 points in the body-normal direction. The largest differences between the solutions are 2% at Mach 12 and 4% at Mach 18.

## Flight boundary layers

Consistency comparisons of predicted boundary layer properties from LAURA, DPLR, and LATCH were performed for one point on the ISSHVFW trajectory (Mach 6, Figures 3–5) and two points on the STS-107 trajectory (Mach 18, Figures 6–8; and Mach 20, Figures 9–11). The comparisons seek to identify similarities or trends between the viscous-CFD and two-layer results for boundary layer thickness,  $Re_\theta/M_e$ ,



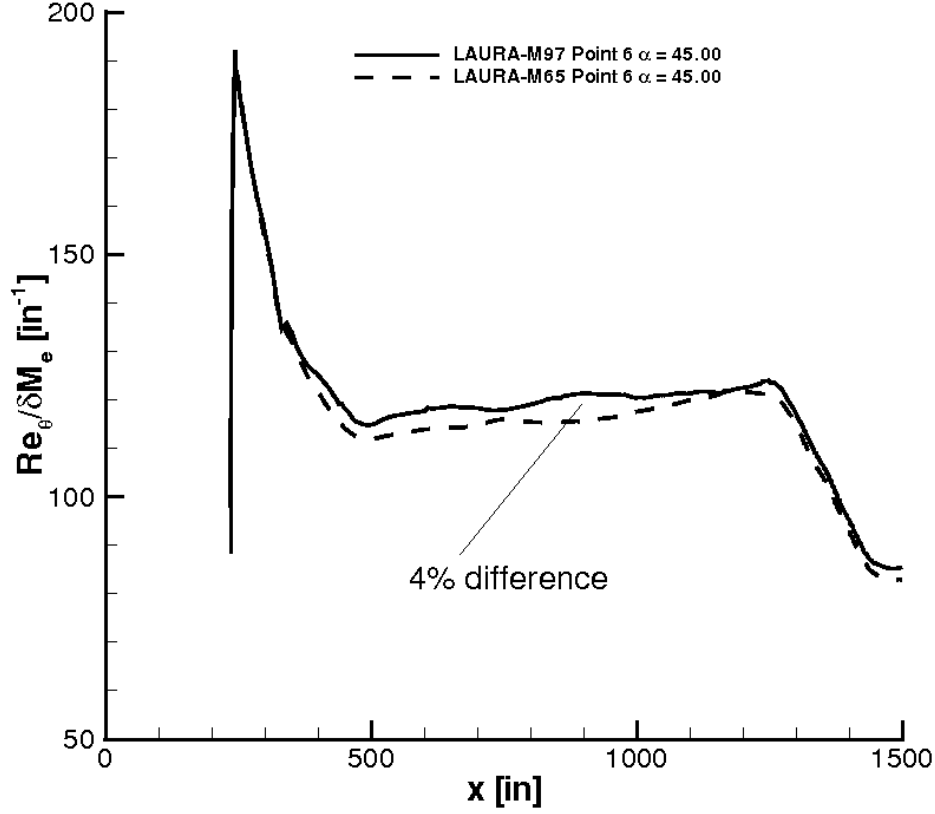


Figure 2. Grid convergence of  $\left(\frac{Re_\theta}{M_e}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{\delta}\right)$  at Mach 18. Fine grid (M 97) has 97 points, versus 65 for coarse (M 65), in the body-normal direction.

and  $\left(\frac{Re_\theta}{M_e}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{\delta}\right)$ . All the comparisons depict wind-side centerline data extractions from the full vehicle solutions.

Boundary layer thickness results for the Orbiter wind side centerline are shown in Figure 3, at Mach 6, Figure 6, at Mach 18, and Figure 9, at Mach 20 flight conditions. For flight cases, the LATCH boundary layer thickness is determined from the momentum thickness based upon a shape factor [10] related to the wall-to-total enthalpy ratio. At Mach 6 the largest difference between the LAURA and LATCH solutions is 19%. At Mach 18 the agreement is better, with a maximum difference of 8%. The LAURA and DPLR solutions differ by less than 5% for both Mach 18 and Mach 20.

Figures 4, 7, and 10 show the corresponding  $Re_\theta/M_e$  results. There is considerable disagreement for LAURA and LATCH results for both Mach 6 and Mach 18: 17% maximum difference for Mach 6 and larger differences along nearly the entire profile for Mach 18. The agreement between LAURA and DPLR results is better, with only 8% maximum differences at Mach 18 and 11% at Mach 20.

The results for  $\left(\frac{Re_\theta}{M_e}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{\delta}\right)$  at Mach 6, Mach 18, and Mach 20 are presented in Figures 5, 8, and 11, respectively. For Mach 6 the discrepancies in boundary layer thickness and  $Re_\theta/M_e$  for LAURA and LATCH counteract one another so that

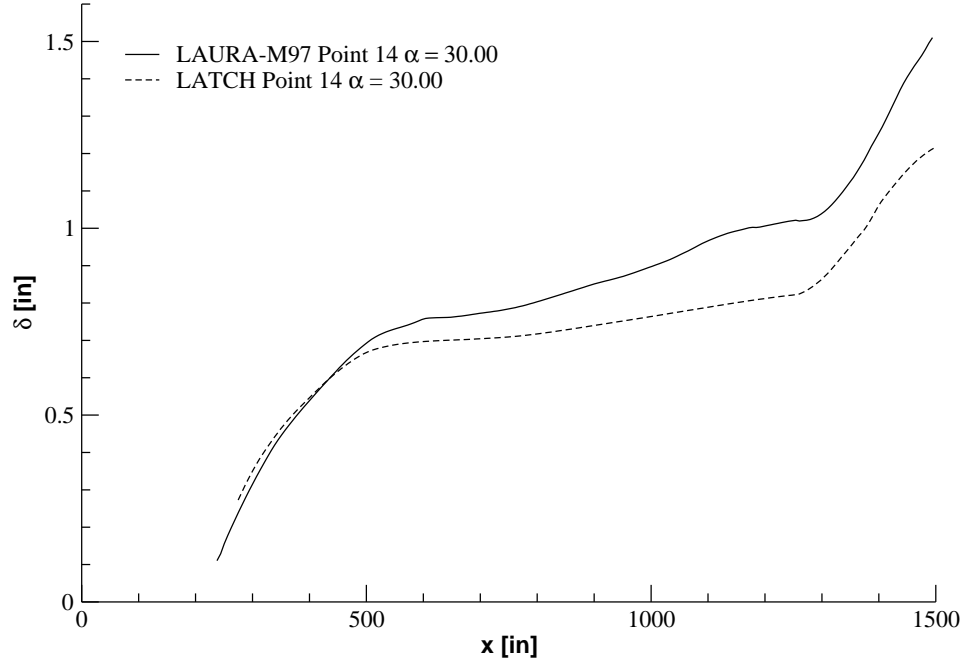


Figure 3. LAURA-LATCH centerline boundary layer thickness, Mach 6 flight.

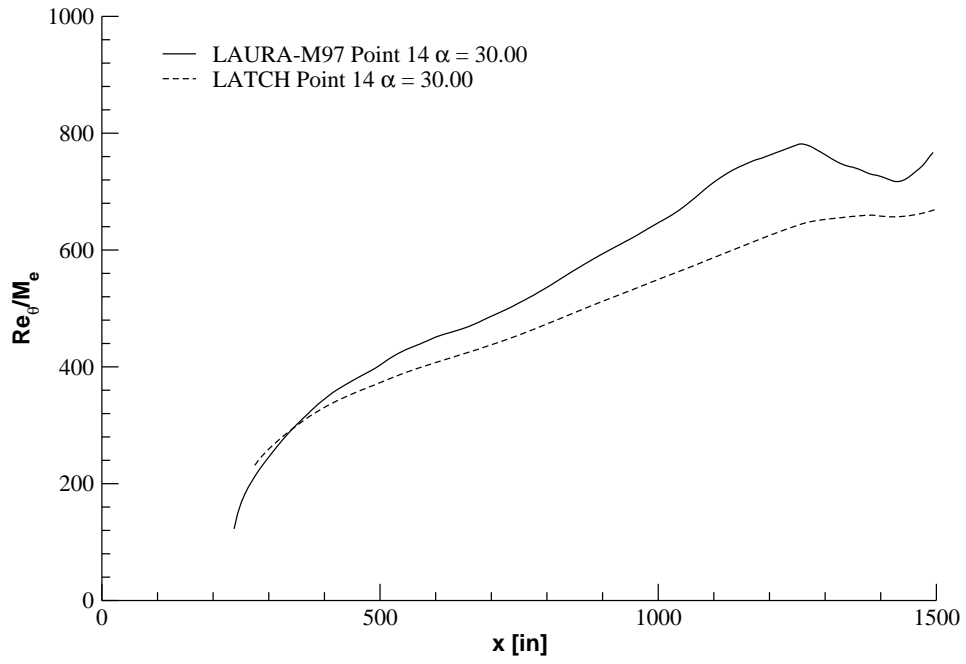


Figure 4. LAURA-LATCH  $Re_{\theta}/M_e$ , Mach 6 flight wind side centerline.

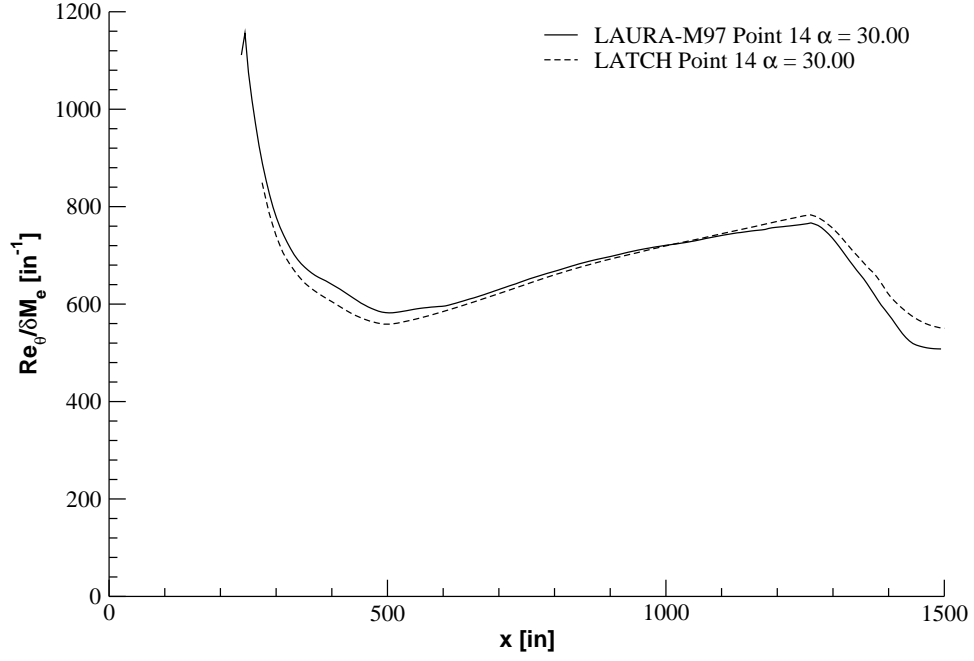


Figure 5. LAURA-LATCH  $\left(\frac{Re_\theta}{M_e}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{\delta}\right)$ , Mach 6 flight wind side centerline.

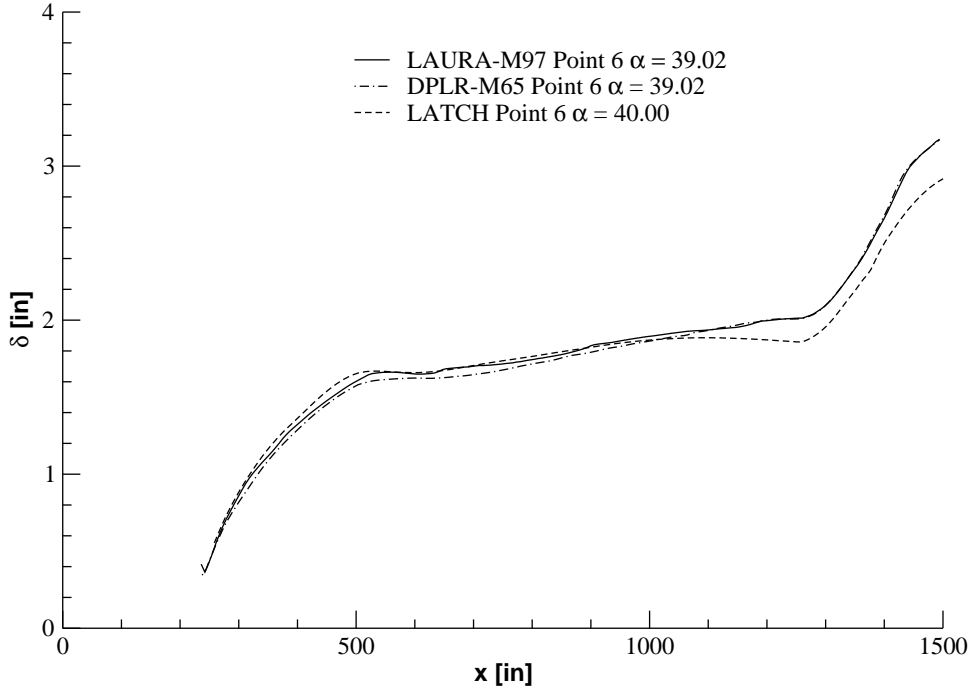


Figure 6. LAURA, DPLR, and LATCH centerline boundary layer thickness, Mach 18 flight.

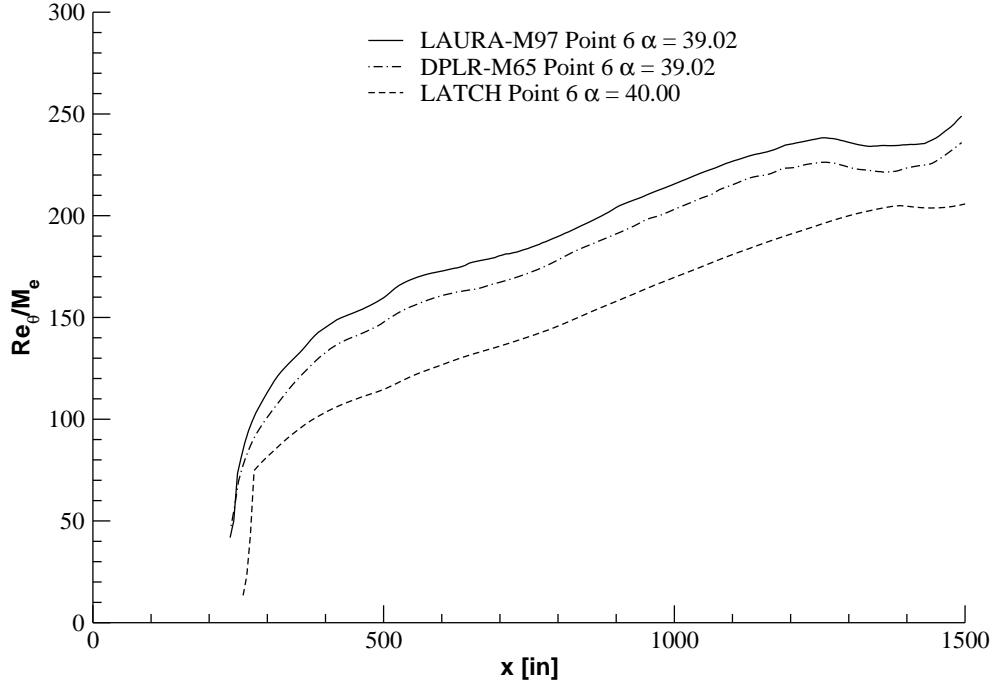


Figure 7. LAURA, DPLR, and LATCH centerline  $Re_{\theta}/M_e$ , Mach 18 flight.

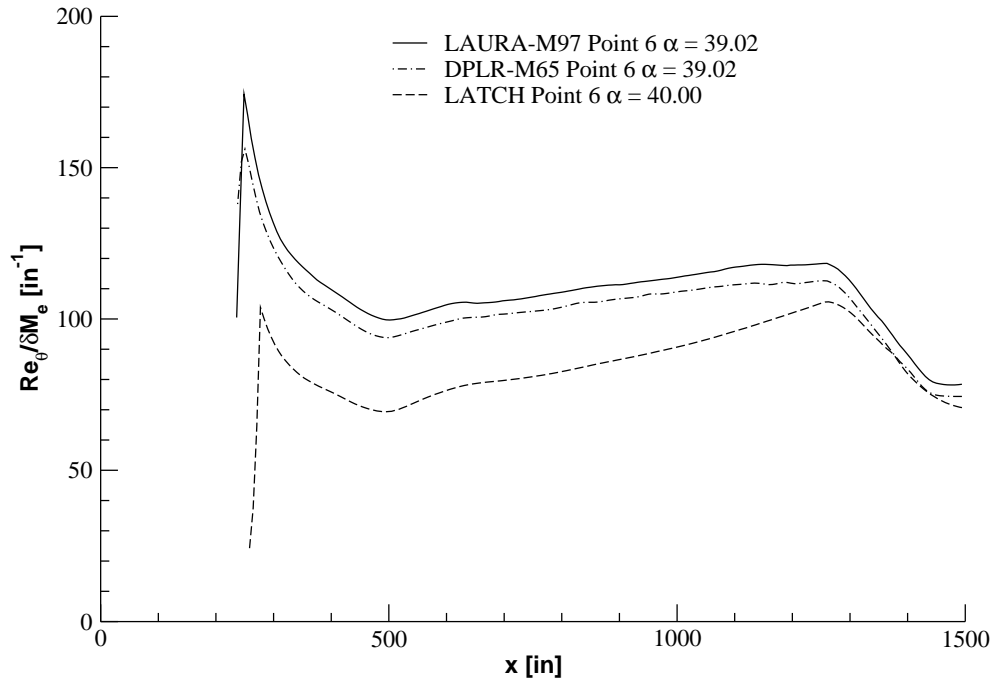


Figure 8. LAURA, DPLR, and LATCH centerline  $\left(\frac{Re_{\theta}}{M_e}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{\delta}\right)$ , Mach 18 flight.

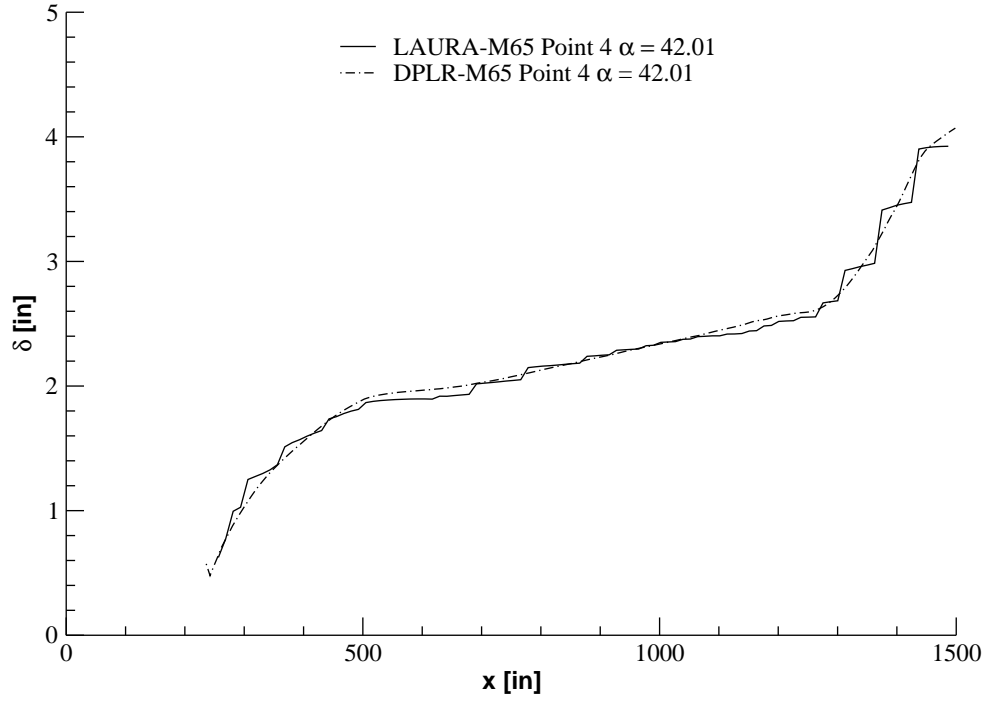


Figure 9. LAURA-DPLR centerline boundary layer thickness, Mach 20 flight.

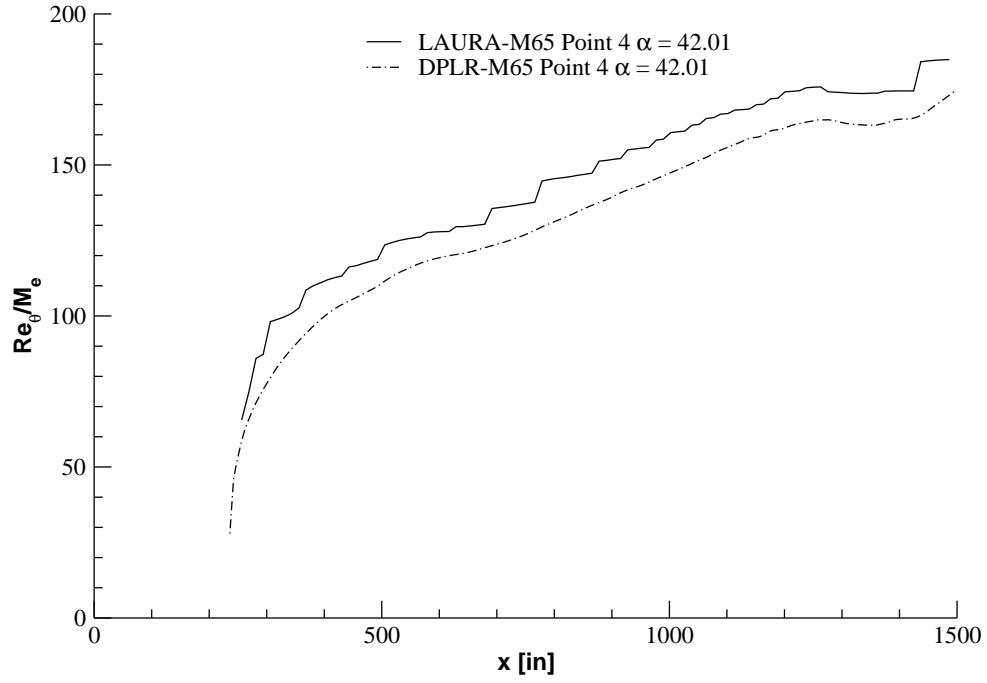


Figure 10. LAURA-DPLR  $Re_\theta/M_e$ , Mach 20 flight wind side centerline.

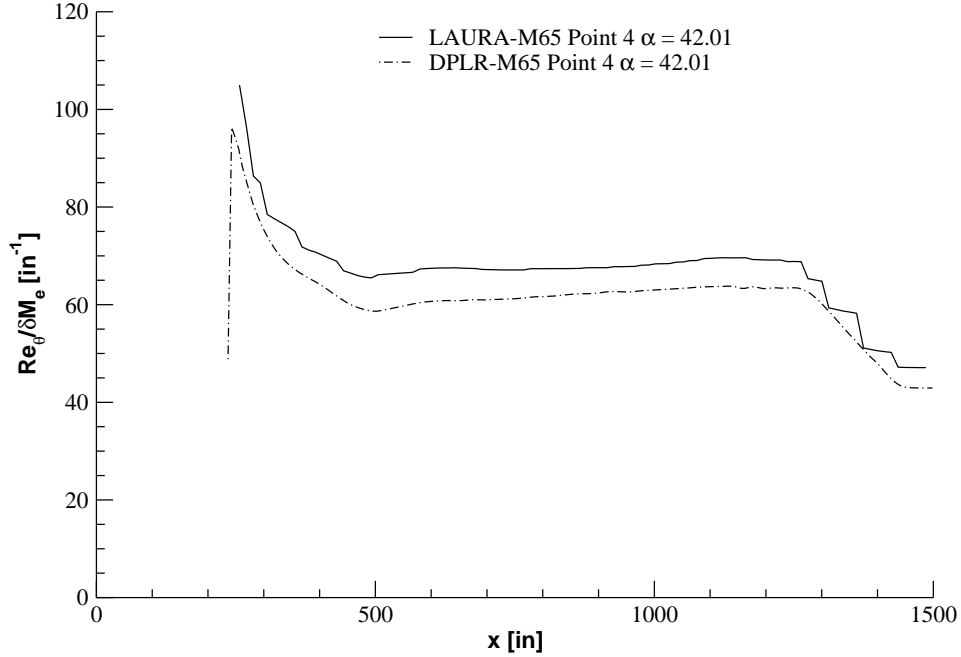


Figure 11. LAURA-DPLR  $\left(\frac{Re_\theta}{M_e}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{\delta}\right)$ , Mach 20 flight wind side centerline.

$\left(\frac{Re_\theta}{M_e}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{\delta}\right)$  is in close agreement. At Mach 18, however, the results do not agree nearly as well. A simple relation between the LATCH and LAURA boundary layer properties is not apparent for these flight conditions. LAURA and DPLR results agree much better at Mach 18 with maximum differences of only 6%. The agreement at Mach 20 has maximum differences of 11%.

The results shown here were drawn from the viscous CFD flight data set. In the current viscous flight data set, solutions were produced using LAURA for  $M \leq 20$  and are a mixture of LAURA and DPLR results for higher Mach numbers.

## Wind tunnel boundary layers

The boundary layer transition correlations are applied using the flight predicted boundary layer properties. The correlations are developed using boundary layer property predictions at wind tunnel conditions corresponding to wind tunnel boundary layer trip experiments. LAURA and LATCH boundary layer thicknesses, Figure 12, and  $Re_\theta/M_e$ , Figure 13, on the wind side centerline are compared for consistency on a 0.75%-scale Orbiter model at Mach 6 wind tunnel conditions. For wind tunnel simulations, the LATCH code relates the boundary layer thickness to the momentum thickness using a constant shape factor, equal to 7.5.

Comparing Mach-6 results in Figures 12 (tunnel) and 14 (flight—repetition of Figure 3 for convenience) the agreement in boundary layer thickness is different for the tunnel than at flight. Both prediction methods agree on the nose cap at both tunnel and flight, up to the 500 inch station in Figure 3 and up to 20% of the body

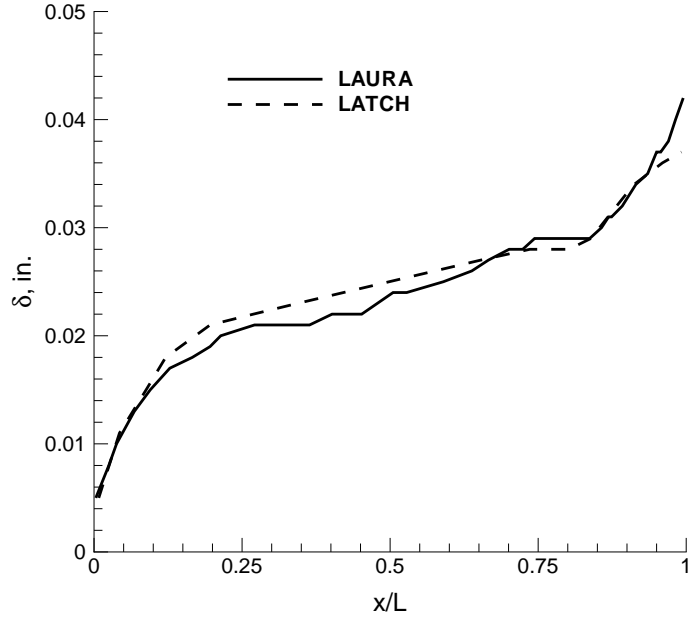


Figure 12. LAURA-LATCH boundary layer thickness comparison, Mach 6 wind tunnel wind side centerline.

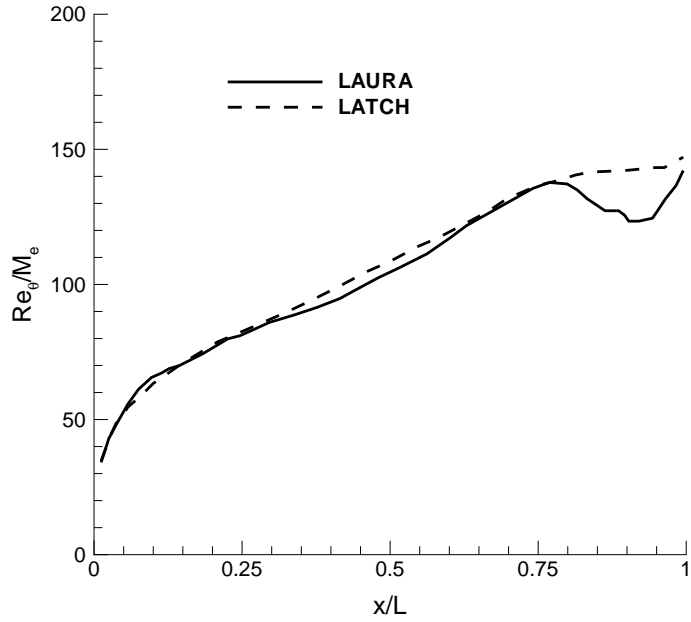


Figure 13. LAURA-LATCH  $Re_\theta/M_e$  comparison, Mach 6 wind tunnel wind side centerline.

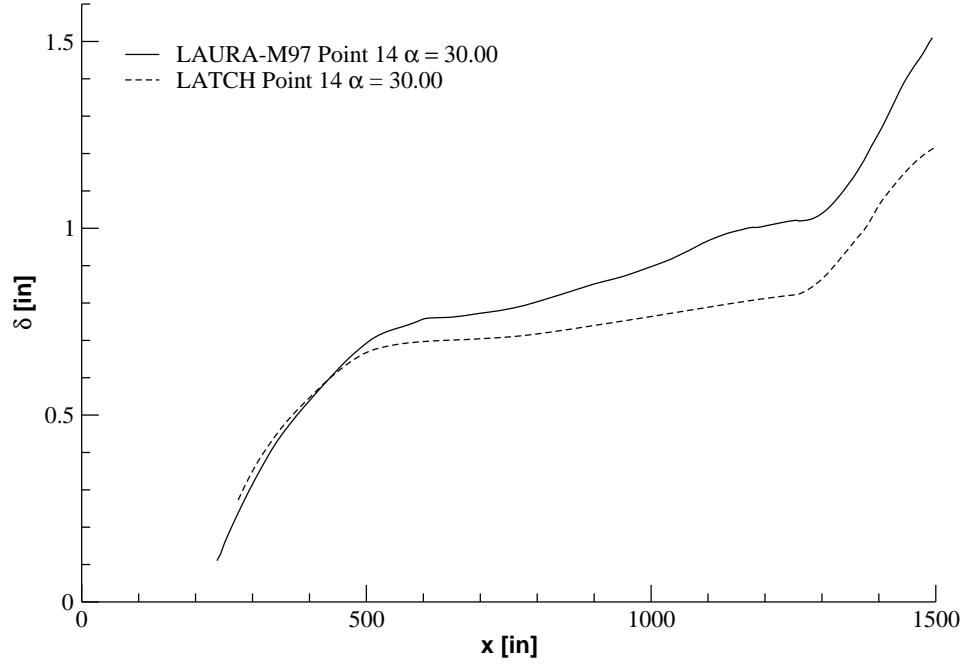


Figure 14. LAURA-LATCH centerline boundary layer thickness, Mach 6 flight.

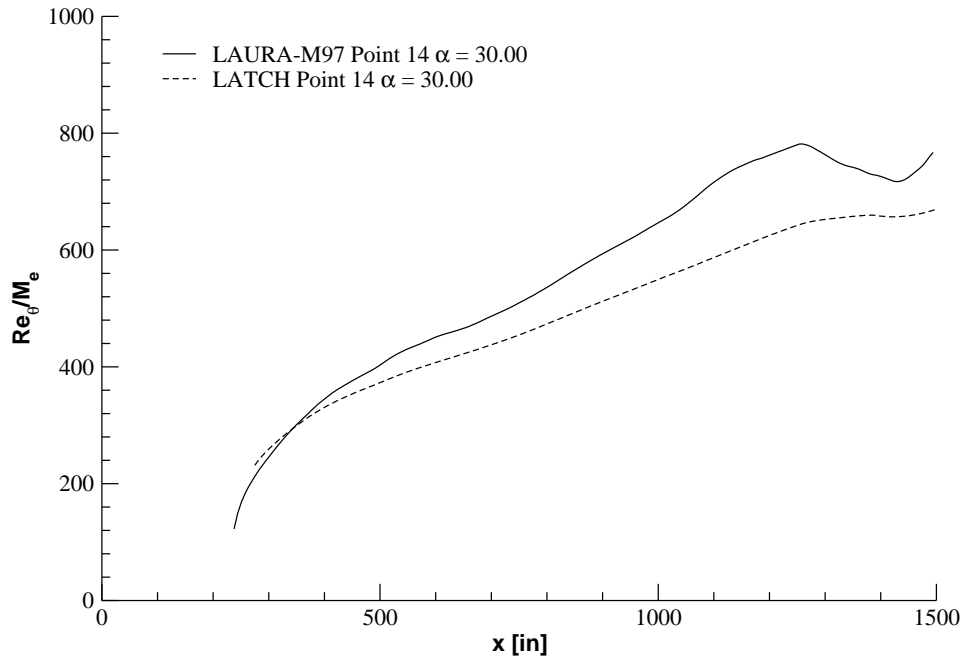


Figure 15. LAURA-LATCH  $Re_{\theta}/M_e$ , Mach 6 flight wind side centerline.



length in Figure 12. But the LAURA boundary layer distribution down the remainder of the centerline is similar between the tunnel and flight conditions. In contrast, the LATCH flight boundary layer thickness grows more slowly with running length at flight than at tunnel conditions. As a result, the LAURA and LATCH boundary layer thicknesses agree at tunnel conditions but have as much as 19% differences at flight. Thus a boundary layer transition correlation developed from the wind tunnel boundary layer thickness data would produce different transition onset predictions when applied at flight conditions, depending upon whether the LATCH or the LAURA flight data sets were used.

The same trends apply to  $Re_\theta/M_e$  as for the boundary layer thickness, shown along the wind side centerline in Figures 13 (tunnel) and 15 (flight—repetition of Figure 4 for convenience). The LAURA and LATCH results are in agreement over the fore 80% of the vehicle at tunnel conditions. At flight, the LAURA and LATCH results are in agreement on the nose cap, but the LATCH results rise more slowly with running length than the LAURA data, with a maximum 17% difference. Again, a boundary layer transition correlation developed from the wind tunnel  $Re_\theta/M_e$  computed data could produce different transition onset predictions when applied at flight conditions using either the LATCH or the LAURA flight data sets.

## Concluding remarks

Orbiter boundary layer properties from viscous CFD solutions were compared along the wind side centerline against results from a two-layer boundary layer prediction tool. The two-layer tool couples inviscid CFD with an approximate boundary layer solver.

As verification of the viscous CFD results, grid convergence of the boundary layer transition parameter  $\left(\frac{Re_\theta}{M_e}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{\delta}\right)$  was checked and observed to be within 5% relative to a 50% increase, from 64 to 96 cells, in grid resolution from the surface to the far field boundary. Also, results from two different viscous CFD codes, LAURA and DPLR, were compared at flight Mach 18 and 20 conditions. Agreement between the codes for boundary layer edge properties is on the order of 10%.

The relationship between the viscous CFD and two-layer results is not consistent between Mach 6 wind tunnel and Mach 6 flight simulations. Similarly, the relationship between the viscous CFD and two-layer results is not consistent between Mach 6 and Mach 18 flight conditions. The differences between the viscous CFD and two-layer results are as much as 30%. A straightforward mapping or scaling of the approximate boundary layer prediction methodology to the viscous CFD results is not readily apparent.

The viscous CFD solutions are recommended to be suitable for the development of boundary layer transition correlations. But it does not appear that the existing two-layer boundary layer results can be leveraged in the development of the necessary tunnel and flight data sets, due to the inconsistency in boundary layer prediction trends between the two-layer and viscous CFD data.

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